

DUCKS NEED MORE THAN BREEDING GROUNDS

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In dealing with migratory waterfowl which, during the course of their lives, require space and its attendant attributes in widely separated parts of the hemisphere, we are accustomed to speak of their requirements in terms of breeding grounds, flyway resting areas and wintering grounds. For many years, indeed, we tended to view these needs as relatively unrelated entities, and applied management of largely local character. Now, we have recognized the futility of manipulation within any one segment of the complex without relating our actions to the whole, and have co-ordinated our activities through the flyway concept. But while we have come to know the inter-relationship of the physical requirements of waterfowl per se, we have fallen short of achieving the broader ecological understanding essential to integration of this resource into our economy, and to its ultimate survival.

A paper given before this conference a year ago made reference to some of the problems connected with the breeding grounds of waterfowl. In saying then that our policy should be to manage our waterfowl in such a way that serious damage to crops is eliminated, while at the same time insuring that no game species is reduced to such an extent that reasonable opportunities for hunting cease to exist, there was an attempt to emphasize the need for recognition of the competition between man and waterfowl - ducks versus grain. We do recognize this competition on the breeding grounds and are attempting to gain insight into the problem through detailed study of the biology of the grain-eating ducks. We suspect that the solution lies in striking an acceptable balance between various types of land use.

The problem indicated between agriculture and waterfowl on their breeding grounds is but one of a vast complex of problems embracing our whole social structure. In agriculture alone we face competitive situations throughout the entire waterfowl range, through drainage, intensive and sometimes destructive livestock range utilizations, agricultural methodology on the wintering grounds and intensification of agricultural effort to build up food surpluses, just to mention a few. In other fields we can add water utilization, power development, oil exploration and industrial pollution as major areas of conflict. It is apparent that this is no trifling problem, the solution of which rests solely with lip service to the local needs of waterfowl and to regulation

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Without belittling the importance of continuing scrutiny and development of management techniques, one ventures to suggest that undue prominence has been given to the technical aspects of waterfowl (wildlife) conservation. Consideration of the fundamental values, and their forceful presentation through word and deed to the public generally, are more likely to result in properly integrated resource use. Certainly any eventual solution to the conflicts inherent in the industrial land-use-waterfowl complex earlier stated must rest with re-examination by the public of our way of life and a decision as to what extent we are prepared to compromise the various needs we feel. As waterfowl specialists our working techniques are reasonably adequate; as citizens our broad objectives, and particularly the means by which we should pursue them, are ill-defined.

With news of atomic explosions and flying saucers with us almost daily it is perhaps difficult to contemplate fruitful life in years ahead. But essential to a resource-conscious attitude and the complete integration of man with his living environment is an atmosphere of serenity and good faith. This may not exist in the world to-day, but it is within the power of the people to create it. If we take the view that there is nothing on earth that cannot contribute to man's satisfaction and development, and that it therefore behooves us to search diligently for the attitudes, policies and techniques to be applied to our resources to ensure that such full contribution is made, we may develop sufficient tolerance and humility to recreate for ourselves the harmony implicit in the annunciation of "peace on earth and good will towards men".

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